Jane Chance, ed. *Women Medievalists and the Academy*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. Pp. 1022 + illus.

When someone at a social gathering asked the late Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896-1989) where her husband was, the never-married medievalist replied, "I am the husband" (485). This remark is just one of many piquant statements made in a compendium that is part mass (auto)biography, part women's history, and part Festschrift for female medievalists of every field, making it a valuable resource for Women's Studies or for the study of biography. *Women Medievalists and the Academy* delves back into the eighteenth century to begin with the career of Elizabeth Elstob (1683-1756) and ends seventy-two chapters and seventy-three lives later with an autobiographical essay by Caroline Walker Bynum (b. 1941), whose philosophical reflections provide both a sense of conclusion and thought-provoking continuity. The book presents and celebrates a legion of female intellectuals who chose to dedicate themselves to an astonishingly diverse range of medieval subjects—from pipe rolls to misericords, from stained glass to epigraphs, and on to Arthurian legends, to name but a few.

In part, Jane Chance imagined this text as a rejoinder to Norman Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (1991), which mentions only one woman. Thus, the book's 1,000-plus pages, most of which comprise biographical essays, but which also include a handful of memoirs, are dedicated wholly to women, most of whom were born before 1935 (as the editor intended). The articles delineate both their lives and their scholarship, and each ends with a select bibliography and list of works cited. The accompanying portraits or photographs (included with all but two) contribute visual poignancy to each. The numerous biographers maintain the objectivity that their task demands; those with personal connections to their subjects manage to express their admiration of them without sounding sycophantic.

The multitude of authors and voices in this volume make it an eclectic mixture of writing styles and narrative priorities. Yet, if one reads from beginning to end, some similarities emerge. The majority of the women featured

(most of them deceased) have somewhat predictable profiles. They are mostly from middle-to upper-class backgrounds—one among them, Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny (1903-1991) even hails from the minor nobility. They usually have solid familial support for their education, ranging from emotional encouragement to wholehearted financial backing. They have the means to travel widely and either study or live abroad. They earn degrees and/or work at Oxford or its all-women Somerville College, at Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, and a handful of other, mostly elite, institutions. Although many find men critical of and derogatory towards them, as well as dismissive of their work and ideas, they also garner their support, and even patronage. Many are early feminists or are involved in early suffrage movements, officially or not. They learn numerous languages and are good at them (that women have historically been encouraged to study languages helps nudge them along the medievalist's career path). Based on the biographical data presented, most are unmarried and childless. All are immensely productive.

Beyond these demographics, several pioneers stand out; for example, Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), the first female to lecture at Oxford; Caroline F. E. Spurgeon (1869-1942), the first scholar to write on Keats' Shakespeare edition; Georgiana Goddard King (1871-1939), who founded Bryn Mawr's Art History Department; Suzanne Solente (1895-1978), who introduced Christine de Pizan to the academic world; Anneliese Maier (1905-1971), the first woman assigned responsibility for a Vatican catalog; Elaine Block (1929-), who is credited with having created misericord studies; and the list continues, with far too many "firsts" to list here.

As life after life unfolds in this tome, a clear portrayal of how women slowly entered academe emerges. Since women were not allowed to pursue graduate study in the mid-1800s, they found other ways to attain the highest standards of intellectual cultivation: Mary Bateson (1865-1906), for example, "unofficially completed a graduate education" through her inexhaustible study of languages and manuscripts, as well as her prolific transcribing, writing, editing, and publishing activities (Dockray-Miller 71). Yet even when women are eventually allowed to earn official doctoral degrees in the 1920s (facilitated by suffrage and the First World War), tales of gender bias abound. Some are awarded

the exotic rank of "Extraordinary Professor" and must wait years to become "Ordinary"; some work without pay; others have on-campus curfews. As their sex is foregrounded over their academic accomplishments, their social status as "non-male" is perhaps most frequently conveyed through forms of address. This is a point that Elizabeth Scala takes up in her article on Edith Rickert (1871-1938).

As Scala researched Rickert's career, she "noticed how often female scholars tended to be addressed by their marital rather than institutional status, most often as 'Miss.' Where male scholars were called 'Doctor' or 'Professor,' female scholars were always marked by their gender" (127). Scala discovers, unsurprisingly, that this is the norm, although most of the women she reads about hold PhDs and teaching positions. She reconciles, however, as regards the references to "Miss Rickert," that the title refers to "a social standard of politeness and decorum lost to the postmodern world—the generation in which Rickert lived would have seen disrespect and perhaps felt fury at a lack of recognition for her gender," and notes that the convention continued into the 1960s (128). It is rather discordant, however, when two of the contributors to this volume also use "Miss" to refer to Mildred K. Pope (1872-1956).

Elspeth Kennedy, a former student of Pope's, explains, in a note to the first paragraph of her essay, that she will use the title "'Miss Pope,' as that was what my generation used for both her and her major work, *From Latin to Modern French with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman*" (155). In a later chapter, Mitzi M. Brunsdale does the same, when she mentions Pope's influence on Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), first referring to her as "Mildred Katherine Pope," but thrice thereafter as "Miss Pope," somewhat ironically pointing out, in one instance, that "Miss Pope held a doctorate from the University of Paris and was a noted medieval scholar of her day" (425). In light of this book's intent, it is somehow off-kilter to see this practice perpetuated here.

Another troubling detail emerges with a full reading of this collection, and it stems from the various connections among the women, from Edith Rickert and her sister Margaret Rickert (1888-1973), to the many professional relationships between colleagues, teachers and students, mentors, and friends, who advise

and critique one another. This becomes increasingly unsettling in that one cannot help but notice that these coalitions form among mostly-privileged, exclusively white women, most of them Anglophones; by my count, an overwhelming fifty-nine out of the seventy-three women included are from either the United States or the British Isles. As a point of contrast, the entire land mass of Latin America is represented by only one person, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel (1910-1962), from Argentina (not Spain, as Chance unfortunately states in her introduction). Chance does admit that "women from non-English-speaking countries are indeed a minority in this volume," yet she does not explain that editorial choice (xxxiv). To faithfully portray the impact of women upon the foundation of the academy and correct that male-dominated history, we surely have to broaden our outlook. As this wonderful collection underscores the many difficult professional and personal choices women have had, and still have, to make if we want to survive and thrive in academia, it also serves to remind us how few of our stories have been told.

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Erin L. Jordan. *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages.* (The New Middle Ages.) Palgrave MacMillan, 2006. Pp. 193.

Erin Jordan's slim volume (a revision of her 2000 Univ. of Iowa dissertation) bears an ambitious title, one that implies a broad study of the imbrications of medieval gender, power and religious patronage. In fact, although the study does consider important aspects of the relationships between those terms, it does so within a very specific context: that of the reigns of Jeanne and Marguerite, countesses of Flanders in the thirteenth century. The book would have been better served with a title that limited its scope to that century, and to those two sisters.

The volume is divided into four chapters and an introduction, plus two appendices (a list of the monastic and religious foundations in Flanders and Hainaut in the thirteenth century and a genealogy of the counts of Flanders), the bibliography, and index. The chapters fall neatly into two halves: the first two discuss, in mostly chronological order, the political trajectories of the two countesses. Chapter